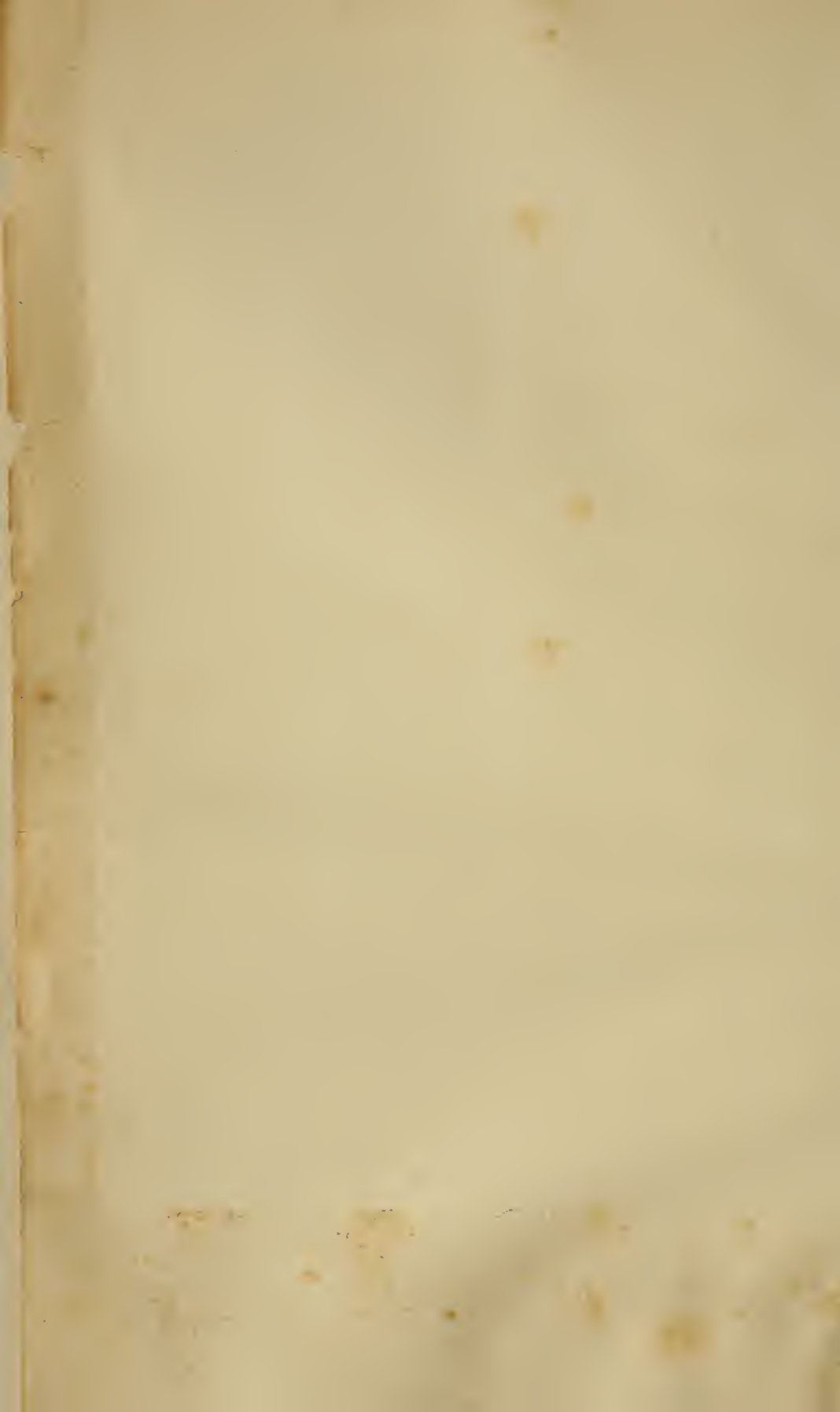




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How the Church should
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Church Reform.

A CHARGE

TO THE CLERGY AND CHURCHWARDENS OF
THE ARCHDEACONRY,

DELIVERED BY

EDWIN PALMER, D.D.

ARCHDEACON OF OXFORD,

At his Visitation in April and May, 1886.

Parker and Co.

OXFORD, AND 6 SOUTHAMPTON-STREET,
STRAND, LONDON.

1886.



My Brethren of the Clergy and of the Laity,

LAST year I spoke to you about Disestablishment, because there were many signs at that time that the question was likely to engage public attention, and in particular the Liberation Society had avowed its desire to make it a test question at the elections which were then approaching. It was not, however, generally accepted as a test question, and the new Parliament has shewn no disposition to deal with it. We shall hear of it again no doubt. But I do not mean to return to it now, though it may be right for me to say that I have not changed my opinion. I remain convinced that no cause, except the cause of Secularism, has reason to expect solid and permanent advantage from the Disestablishment of the Church of England.

This year I propose to speak of another question which has been brought prominently forward during the last six months—I mean the question of Church Reform. Church Reform has been represented by some men of considerable mark as an alternative for Disestablishment. Mr. Albert Grey, the member for the Tyneside Division of Northumberland, is the most conspicuous advocate of this view. ‘Do not disestablish the Church,’ he says, ‘reform it.’ I desire to protest against the notion that there is any necessary connexion between the questions of Church Reform and

Disestablishment. Except I greatly deceive myself, men who represent Church Reform as the alternative for Disestablishment are already (whether they know it or not) a long way on the road to Disestablishment. They say, in effect, that the Church, as it is, does not deserve to retain its privileges and endowments, although, if their advice be taken, it may be made worthy to retain them. Now I am not going to assert that any man on earth deserves all the blessings which he enjoys, nor am I going to make this assertion of any society of men. There is a homely proverb which sums up human desert: and there are weighty and solemn words in the Gospel which tell the same tale. But yet I join issue, unhesitatingly, with this class of Church Reformers. I contend that the Church of England, as she is, weighted with the short-comings of all her members, and disgraced by the misconduct of individuals here and there, is at the present time doing a work for the cause of Christ which would be sorely missed if she could suddenly be destroyed—a result which is happily beyond the power of human malice and human folly—and sorely marred if human malice or folly could succeed in stripping her of her endowments. For this reason I cannot accept the position that the two questions of Church Reform and Disestablishment are necessarily connected together. I am prepared, now as last year, to argue against Disestablishment on the basis of things as they are.

Indeed, I should not have much heart myself to maintain this argument, if I could only ground it on the hope that the Church would use her privileges and endowments better in future than she has ever done hitherto.

In one sense, however, there is a real connexion between these two questions. Men naturally begin to consider, when they hear others talk of Disestablishment, what the Church is, what are her privileges, and what she is doing. Her defects are canvassed, and a remedy for them is demanded. Nor is this the case only with persons who bear ill-will to the Church, or with persons in whose thoughts she has found hitherto little place. The most loyal of her children are inclined at such a time to consider the question of Church Reform, and that for two reasons: first, because they think that the removal of palpable blots upon her system will diminish the power of her assailants, and secondly, because the fact that she is the object of public attention at the moment seems to promise an increased chance of success in attempts to remove such blots. For this reason, indeed, attacks upon the Church from without are not an unmixed evil. It is at least possible that they may help true reformers to overcome that *vis inertiae* which stands in the way of all improvement. I have already said that no institution is perfect. In all things human there is always room for amendment. We must never shut our eyes to abuses or close our ears against

proposals for their removal. At such a time as this, for example, when the Church is publicly criticized, loyal Churchmen should take note of all criticisms and all proposals. But each criticism and each proposal must be examined on its own merits.

Some proposals are essentially unreasonable. Whether the evils which they are intended to meet are within the reach of legislation or not, these proposals at all events can do nothing but mischief. Other proposals deal with matters of sharp dispute—sometimes of ancient dispute—within the Church herself. When this is the case, active remedies involve something like civil war in the immediate future and no small risk of ultimate disruption. In other cases, again, defects are alleged which are admitted to be real defects by a vast majority of Churchmen. And yet even in these cases there is not always a royal road to improvement. I will mention examples of each kind.

Men are dissatisfied because the Church does not command the willing and hearty allegiance of all Englishmen. It is called, they say, the national Church, and it ought to include the whole nation. Why does it not? Why, I will venture to ask, do men who seem to be equally intelligent and equally honest differ upon almost every subject practical or speculative? He who can answer one question can answer the other. But in matters of religion men are singularly impatient of

this diversity. It is easy to understand their impatience; in some sense it is hard not to share it. That our Lord and Saviour desires His followers to be one—not merely in England, or within this or that kingdom or country, but all the world over—we know from manifold evidence in Holy Scripture, and especially from His own words in the seventeenth chapter of S. John's Gospel. But we know also that He desires all men to be just and merciful and pure. And yet they are not. No doubt, when His will is revealed plainly, we do well to be zealous for its accomplishment. We do well, for example, to pray—I wish that all men prayed daily—for the unity of Christendom; we do well to persuade men to unity, to the uttermost of our power, by our words and by our deeds. But this is not enough for human impatience. Men attempt to produce an artificial unity by methods of their own. Such attempts do not produce the fruit which is desired; they often produce evil fruit instead. At many times in the world's history—in the history of this country both before and after the Reformation—the method employed has been compulsion. By various legal penalties, by the penalty of death itself, men have attempted to compel dissidents into the fold. Only within the last two hundred years has the law of England fully and frankly recognised the existence of English citizens who do not conform to the English Church. The method of enforcing conformity on the unwilling

is happily abandoned. But the same misguided zeal, which does not hesitate to trample the facts of human nature under foot, has re-appeared in another shape. Since it is impossible to force all Englishmen into the English Church, some Church Reformers now desire to force the Church to include all Englishmen. To this end it has been seriously proposed that all creeds and all securities for definite teaching shall be abolished. It is true that the chief advocates of this proposal are men who do not join in our worship; but it has found favour here and there with individuals in our own Church and even among our own clergy. The idea might seem to be borrowed from the constitution of Board Schools. But there is, of course, no analogy between a Board School and a religious society. The prohibition of doctrinal teaching in Board Schools is intelligible because the primary object of Board Schools is instruction in secular subjects. To prohibit doctrinal teaching in a religious society is an absurdity, because the principle of unity in religious societies is a common belief and a common worship. There may be religious societies which affect to disown these bonds; but at all events the Church of England is not one of them. That she is a religious society with a common belief and a common worship is patent to all. If she were to abandon these she would cease to exist. The project, then, of which I speak is not a project of reform but of destruction. I have already

protested against the notion that Church Reform in any shape is to be regarded as an alternative for Disestablishment. This particular kind of Reform, if it were conceivable that the Legislature should attempt to impose it on the Church, would be only a circuitous method of Disestablishment. It would drive out all earnest Churchmen—clergy and laity alike. But it is not conceivable, because it would outrage the religious instincts of Nonconformists as well as of Churchmen. I should not have said so much about it, if it were not that an active group of Church Reformers has indicated some disposition to look upon it with favour. Else it ignores the facts of English life and English thought; it ignores the facts of human nature.

Another project, which is quite distinct from this, shews a similar disposition to ignore facts. I mean the project with which Mr. Albert Grey has specially identified himself. He proposed in Parliament five years ago to give to Church Boards (as he then called them), in which all rate-payers should have equal rights, the control of Church affairs in each parish. One subject which he desired to refer to these Boards was the conduct of public worship in the parish church. The evil which Mr. Grey had in view was, I presume, the autocracy of the parish priest. He ascribed, I suppose, to that cause the dissensions to be seen in some parishes and the alienation of some portions of the laity from the Church. It is impos-

sible to deny that such an evil exists. An incumbent may be found, here and there, who seems to consider no man's judgment but his own, and takes no care to keep touch either with his Bishop or with his parishioners. But Mr. Grey's remedy is worse than the disease. It is simply unreasonable. He still adheres, however, to his plan, and it has been taken up by others. Of late the name of Parish Councils has been used more frequently in connexion with this plan than the name of Church Boards: but the thing intended is the same—at all events the thing intended by the most ardent and consistent advocates of the scheme. It is a Board or Council for the control of Church affairs within each parish, which shall be elected by the whole body of the ratepayers. Such a proposal seems to involve the assumption that all the ratepayers in every English parish are members of the Church of England. But this, we know, is not the fact. Some persons, I am aware, contend that, whether it is the fact or not, it is the law. Every English citizen, they say, is in virtue of his citizenship a member of the Church of England. I venture to contradict the assertion. There is, I believe, no legal ground for it whatever. A single Rubric seems sufficient to overthrow it, for all the Rubrics in the Prayer-book have the force and authority of statute law. I mean the Rubric which stands at the head of the Burial Service: 'This Office is not to be used for any that die unbaptized, or excommunicate, or

have laid violent hands upon themselves.' Three sorts of persons are mentioned here who are not members of the Church : persons who have never been admitted into it by Baptism—the only door of entrance ; persons who have been cut off from it by formal sentence of excommunication ; persons who have cut themselves off from it by wilful and deliberate suicide. For my purpose the first class is the most important. Unbaptized persons—whether they call themselves Christians, or (like the Jews and heathens who live amongst us) disclaim that name—are not members of the Church of England. Mr. Grey and his friends seem to confuse two designations which are far from being equivalent—Church members and parishioners. All persons who pay rates in an English parish, whether they reside in it or not, are undoubtedly parishioners. But it does not follow that they are all members of the Church. I do not deny that the law of England is in some degree accountable for the confusion of thought of which I have been speaking, although it certainly does not lay down so strange a position as that Jews or other unbaptized persons are members of the English Church. The law does, no doubt, concede to all parishioners, without distinction of creed, votes in the parish vestry, although some matters which come before that vestry concern Churchmen only, and it regards all parishioners, without distinction of creed, as eligible for the office of churchwarden. But these are not recent provisions of the Legis-

lature; they are mere survivals from a state of things which has long ceased to exist. The fact is that, as I have said already, the Legislature until two hundred years ago assumed that all Englishmen must needs accept the doctrine and worship of the Church, and treated as criminals those who refused to conform. When at last it opened its eyes and passed the Toleration Act, it was slow to recognise all the consequences involved in that Act. For a long time,—within the memory indeed of living men,—there were many civil and municipal offices to which no one was eligible unless he received the Holy Communion in the Church. On the other hand the law did not exclude a Dissenter from the office of churchwarden. The ineligibility of Dissenters for civil and municipal offices was at last removed. I rejoice heartily in this change. But their eligibility for the churchwardenship remained unaltered and unheeded. And yet the unreasonableness of the thing is patent. The theory of the churchwarden's office implies that he is a worshipper in the church, ready at hand and willing to collect the alms at the Offertory, and to keep order in the church if occasion arise. Besides, he is the guardian of its fabric and its possessions, and he has a voice in the distribution of the alms collected in it during the reading of the Offertory sentences. I am well aware that Dissenters have been from time to time elected churchwardens and have discharged that office usefully. In these instances I must

suppose that they have been persons who were equally at home in church and in chapel, or at all events were not hostile to the Church. But whatever may be said of such exceptional cases, the election to the churchwardenship of a thorough-going Nonconformist is plainly contrary to reason, and liable to produce great inconvenience and great heartburnings. We Church people are a long-suffering race. We know that our countrymen have not a keen sense of anomalies. We know that the Legislature is slow to interfere with ancient custom. And so we do not agitate for a change in the existing law in this respect. But, when an ancient custom which is indefensible in reason is made the basis of a new departure, it is time for us to speak out. A man contradicts both reason and law who asserts that unbaptized persons are members of the Church of England. A man is playing with words who asserts that all baptized ratepayers are, in any true and practical sense, members of the Church of England. To give the whole body of ratepayers, without distinction of creed, any kind of control over the services of the Church would be contrary to all reason. To give ratepayers who are not really Church people any new power whatever in matters which concern Church people only would be a flagrant injustice. I do not suppose that Nonconformists, generally, desire any such powers for themselves. On the contrary, I think it probable that, if such a law as Mr. Albert Grey advocates

were passed, Nonconformists would seldom take advantage of it. But in all communities, now and then, mischievous and wrong-headed people are to be found. This project would arm such people with statutory powers. These two, then, are examples of attempts to remedy evils real or supposed by measures which are not consistent with reason and can bear no fruit but mischief.

Other schemes of Reform are of a controversial character. Large sections of earnest Churchmen are disagreed on the subjects which they concern. The measures that one school would regard as salutary would be regarded by another as pernicious. Examples of this sort are supplied by conflicting schemes of Prayer-book Revision. One school regards our Prayer-book as too Protestant, another as not Protestant enough. I need not specify the alterations which have been suggested on this side and on that. It is enough for me to remind you that these rival schools have existed among us from the days when the Prayer-book was first compiled. It was the deliberate purpose of its compilers to make it such as both could accept. The same purpose governed each subsequent Revision. If this policy were now abandoned and the Prayer-book altered to suit the views of one section only, there would be a real danger of disruption. Moreover, in the course of the last three hundred years this book has endeared itself to thousands by its own beauty as well as by familiar use. It is our wisdom to turn

a deaf ear to the criticisms of partisans, whether they belong to the party with which we are ourselves in sympathy or to another.

I have mentioned these two classes of projects first, because they seem to interest those who advocate them more warmly than any other projects of Church Reform, and yet they must be refused admittance into the programme of any one who loves the Church of England and desires her preservation. I now come to subjects of a different character. There is a wide field of Church Reform in which loyal Churchmen may find scope for their energies. There are many matters upon which there is a large amount of agreement, so far as criticism of the present state of things is concerned, though there may be less agreement about the choice and employment of remedies. I will touch upon some of the principal points which have been brought forward.

First I will name the want of a Church legislature with power to legislate. I am bound to admit that some people may class this subject with those which I have termed controversial. But it is separated from them, so far as I can see, by one broad distinction. To whatever section we may belong, we must (one would think) all agree that every religious society ought to have power of internal legislation. Let me take an example of this need among ourselves. Excellent as our Prayer-book is, its shortness and simplicity prevents it from containing a supply of Special

Services for special occasions. We want such Services. We want a proper sanction for their use. For this reason some people have put down in their lists of needful Church Reforms the relaxation of the Act of Uniformity. To such a demand, in this vague and general shape, I cannot subscribe. It might be equivalent to the abolition of the Prayer-book. But it seems reasonable, that it should be made lawful for us—the Act of Uniformity notwithstanding—to use in our churches on special occasions any Special Services which have been sanctioned by proper authority, such an authority, for example, as the Convocations of both Provinces. I should be carried too far if I were to specify other purposes for which the Church of England needs freedom of legislation. Of course I am aware that it is a favourite thesis with some politicians that ‘an Established Church cannot have such freedom.’ I am not an advocate of Disestablishment. But—to say nothing of the amount of freedom which the Scottish Establishment actually enjoys—it might be perhaps a sufficient check in a statesman’s eyes on such freedom as I have named, if the Crown reserved power to disallow, of its own motion or upon an address from either House of Parliament, measures passed by Convocation.

The mention of Convocation calls up, naturally, other projects of Reform. One of these concerns the constitution of Convocation itself, on its old theory, as the Synod of the Clergy. It is thought

by many persons that the Lower House of Convocation is not sufficiently representative. It contains, they say, too large a proportion of official members. Moreover, in the election of Proctors, unbeneficed clergy have no votes. These things deserve consideration at least. I venture to think that Convocation itself is the fittest body to consider them. At present, however, lawyers seem to hold that Convocation would have no power to reform its own constitution, even if it obtained the licence of the Crown for its deliberations, and the approval of the Crown for its conclusions.

Another matter, and a larger one, is the share of the laity in the counsels of the Church. I mean of course the Church laity. I have said already that, in my judgment, to vest in those who are not really Church people new powers of control over the internal affairs of the Church would be unjust and unreasonable. But the Church laity are as integral a part of the Church as the clergy, and the Church is in constant need of their counsel. The difficulties, however, which beset this question are great. It may be doubted whether it will ever receive a perfect solution while the present connexion of Church and State subsists. Certainly we are not ready yet with a plan to lay before Parliament. On the other hand there seems to be no risk of the question going to sleep. The paralysis of Church legislation, of which I have complained, has led already to voluntary and informal action. In almost every Diocese the Bishop

has asked clergy and laity to meet in conference. A Central Council, consisting of three clergymen and three laymen elected by each of these Conferences out of its own members, has met for some years past in London. This present year has seen the first meetings of a House of Laymen elected by the lay-members of these same Conferences, on the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury, which he issued after consultation with the Houses of Convocation in his Province. This House of Laymen has met at the same times with Convocation, and has discussed some of the subjects with which Convocation was engaged. These facts shew, at all events, that the clergy are fully alive to the importance of this question. You will remember that it was the Bishops who originated the Diocesan Conferences, that it was the Convocation of the Clergy who suggested the assembling of a House of Laymen. Some years hence we shall know better than we do now, whether it is desirable to seek Parliamentary recognition for any Church councils, lay or mixed, which are unknown at present to the law.

If one of the defects in the Church of England is the want of a Church legislature, another is the want of Courts which command universal respect and willing obedience. I do not propose to go into this question now. You all know how much time was devoted to it two years ago by a Royal Commission. The Report of that Commission is confessed on all hands to be most valuable; it is

a repertory of information to which nothing similar was accessible before. But the question remains hung up. The recommendations of the Commission failed to satisfy either of the most important parties in the Church. I am unwilling to class this among controversial questions; and yet I fear that new legislation upon it at the present time would be likelier to breed disagreement than agreement. On one subject, however, all are agreed, which is connected with the question of Church Courts. I mean the importance of adequate provision for the removal of unworthy ministers from the charge of parishes. Cases arise from time to time—I thank God that they are rare—which cause great scandal. Common fame imputes to one man breaches of morality—drunkenness or incontinence; to another man gross neglect of his ministerial duties. It is a grave blot on the Church that persons should retain possession of their benefices of whom such things are believed. If we put it in this way, there is no room for difference of opinion among Christian men. Indeed, it is a subject which continually occupies the attention of the Bishops and of Convocation. But I sometimes wish that eager reformers would consider this matter as closely and as practically as our Bishops consider it. Common fame is not always true. It would be intolerable tyranny if a man were removed from the employment by which he lives, on the ground of reports which might have originated in honest

misconstruction or in malicious slander. A clergyman has the same right as a layman to demand that he shall be convicted before he is punished. I need not tell you how difficult it is to obtain proof of such offences as I have named. "It appertaineth," however, "to the discipline of the Church," says our Article—more than this, it concerns the honour of Almighty God and the welfare of human souls—"that inquiry be made of evil Ministers, and that they be accused of those that have knowledge of their offences; and finally being found guilty by just judgement be deposed." In this matter we must all surely be of one mind. But experience has shewn that it is a matter of exceeding difficulty. Nor in the whole field of Church Reform do I know any question on which we need more urgently the counsel of lay members of the Church.

Another defect in the present system of the Church which has been often noticed, and which has been brought forward again recently, is the inequality of clerical stipends. Not only are Archbishops, Bishops, Deans, Canons, and sometimes Archdeacons, in receipt of incomes which contrast invidiously with those of the parochial clergy, but one Bishop, one Dean, one Canon, one Archdeacon, has a larger official income than another, and the inequality is by no means always proportioned to the inequality in the amount of their work. The same thing is true of the parochial clergy. Their official incomes vary greatly, and not only

does this variation bear no systematic proportion to their work, but it often happens that large incomes and light work, heavy work and small incomes, go together. Is there no remedy, men ask, for this? I fear that there is only one remedy which would go to the root of the matter, and that is a remedy to which the objections are numerous and grave. I mean that the Ecclesiastical Commission, or some new Commission, should take into its hands all the sources of ecclesiastical revenue in this country and re-apportion among the clergy the sums received from them. It has often been argued that such a process would only substitute one evil for another, a dead level of poverty for an irregular distribution of narrow and abundant stipends. I am not going to insist on this objection. It does not, however, stand alone. There is sometimes a feeling of grievance now among parishioners, when a tithe rent-charge upon the land in one parish goes away to make provision for another. I need not point out that the scheme I have named would multiply occasions for such complaints. Again, the law has encouraged private persons for many centuries to look upon advowsons as valuable property. This is a view with which I have myself little sympathy: but it has long been the view of the law. It is obvious that such a measure as I have mentioned would involve an enormous amount of interference with the value of this property. In my own eyes, I must confess, the strongest objection to the scheme

is that it would make all the clergy stipendiaries of a great central board. It would not only facilitate the process of confiscation, if plans of confiscation became popular; but it would make it easy for the Legislature to reduce at pleasure the incomes of the clergy, without talk of confiscation. We have seen already the working of a system like this in France. Instead of a dead level of poverty, we might have a dead level of starvation.

Another cause of offence, and the last which I will mention, is the traffic in presentations and advowsons. You all know that this traffic is perfectly legal within certain limits. The most important of these are that no patron can sell a presentation when the living is vacant, and that, if a patron sells an advowson when the living is vacant, the right of presenting on that vacancy does not pass to the purchaser. But is it right that presentations and advowsons should be saleable at all? I am treading on controversial ground, but I cannot honestly suppress my own opinion. I think that they ought not to be saleable. It seems to me a true and natural instinct which leads men to recoil from this market. The old canonists were, I believe, in the right when they defined simony to mean the buying and selling either of things spiritual or of things indissolubly connected with things spiritual. The name of simony has, no doubt, given rise to much dispute. Simon Magus, it is said with truth, proposed to buy a power strictly spiritual, not a place of emolument

which was indissolubly connected with the discharge of spiritual functions. I cannot but think, however, that the Church was right when it extended the meaning of the word. But, after all, the name is of no real importance. The question is about the thing. Is it or is it not, in itself, a fitting thing that a charge of souls should be either directly or indirectly bought and sold? I note with satisfaction that the legislature of this country has long since shewn some misgiving on this subject. Although in legal language an advowson is property, and saleable, the law has laid restrictions on its sale which it has laid on the sale of no other kind of property. As early as Queen Elizabeth's reign it was made an offence by statute (13 Eliz., c. 6) to take money for presenting to vacant ecclesiastical benefices—in other words to sell a presentation when the benefice was vacant. It requires a lawyer's eye to discover a difference in principle between such a sale and the sale of a next presentation. Even in effect these two transactions are often virtually identical. A further step was taken in the reign of Queen Anne when it was enacted (12 Anne, c. 11. sect. 2) that, if a clergyman bought a next presentation, and upon the vacancy was presented or collated to the benefice, such presentation or collation should be void, and that turn should fall to the Crown. I need not remind you that there are signs of a growing disposition in Parliament to prohibit all sale of next presentations. Such a prohibition

would remove much scandal, but it would not remove all. The sale of advowsons often gives occasion to great and just scandal. Nor can I myself pretend to see a difference in principle between the sale of presentations and the sale of advowsons. There are, however, enormous difficulties in the way of the proposal to forbid absolutely all sale of advowsons. The sanction which the law of England has given from ancient times to the sale of advowsons has induced many people to look upon the purchase of an advowson in the light of an investment. Advowsons have often been purchased by men who would never have laid out their money in this way, if they had not been assured that the property which they bought would be legally saleable whenever they wished to part with it. There are other difficulties of less importance: this is a difficulty which can hardly be exaggerated. No satisfactory proposal for compensation to owners of advowsons has yet been devised. I am bound to add that the sale of advowsons still finds defenders among men of eminence and high character. But this is true concerning the sale of next presentations also. So potent is a bad law to corrupt the national conscience. All abuses die hard. This abuse, however, belongs to a class which has found little favour in our own times. There is no other species of public employment which the law now permits to be offered for sale directly or indirectly.

I have not attempted to touch upon all the

points which may be brought under the head of Church Reform. I have desired to shew that some of the most important proposals which have been made are contrary to reason and justice; that others cannot be entertained without danger of breaking the Church in pieces; that others again require time and patience, and the application of the best wits among us, lay and clerical, for their treatment. But I am anxious not to be misunderstood. I have no desire to close my own ears or those of others to the cry for Church Reform. On the contrary, I would counsel all my brethren to listen to friends and foes alike on this subject, but I would counsel them also to weigh carefully for themselves the truth of the allegations made and the wisdom of the reforms suggested. Where a real evil is pointed out, I would pray them to join heartily in the search for a remedy, and to accept thankfully any assistance which the special circumstances of the time may offer. Against one notion I have protested emphatically: I mean the notion that we must needs make changes in our system in order to avoid the peril of Disestablishment. Such a notion might easily lead men to do the Church irreparable mischief: I do not believe that a policy founded upon it would save the Establishment. Our duty is to think first of the Church in her essence, the faith once delivered to the saints, the framework which has come down to us from Apostolic times. These

things must be guarded at all hazards. The retention of privileges and endowments is a secondary consideration. Reform of real evils must be sought, not because Reform is a popular word, but because such evils diminish the efficiency of the Church. I have contended, and am always ready to contend, for the retention of the ancient buildings and ancient endowments to which no man can shew any title but ourselves, and which we may not surrender with a good conscience, while we can keep them without prejudice to higher interests. But lands and buildings do not constitute the Church, nor would their loss destroy her. Her life did not originate with Kings or Parliaments; while she is true to herself, Kings and Parliaments can never take it away.

Let me add one word more. I have spoken of Church Reform as a subject for grave consideration. I have spoken of it as an end for which legislation by the Church herself is desirable. I have spoken of it as a matter for which we may need the aid of Parliament. But the part which each of us can take (with all the thought and pains that we can bestow) in promoting such reforms as I have mentioned, is slender and indirect. There is another way, more direct and more important, in which we can all contribute; and that way is to reform ourselves: to do our duties, clergy and laity, in our proper places and

stations: to attend to the voice of God in our own hearts and in His written Word: to speak the truth boldly, and not partake in other men's sins, but keep ourselves pure. May God of His infinite mercy help us all to do so!





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